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ABSTRACT

Middle school students need to develop self-esteem, flexible and inquiring minds, relatively close human relationships, and a sense of belonging and purpose or usefulness. This paper discusses an effective middle school activities program at the Leawood Middle School in Leawood, Kansas, which helps meet these identified needs. The Leawood program includes the following components: an advisor/advisee program coupled with public service projects (60 projects underway); student government; interschool atheletics; drill team; cheerleading; performing arts; an intramural program; and the PACE (Participatory Activities Create Enjoyment) program. PACE, which is described in detail, combines the components of a school club program with a formal school academic competition program and offers activities that are age level appropriate. All students are involved for a minimum of 25 minutes on every Friday morning of the school year. The activities have proven to be educationally beneficial and participatory in nature. They enhance self-confidence and, in low-stress situations, enable the students to learn about teamwork and the importance of cooperation and mutual support. (LL)

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A MIDDLE SCHOOL ACTIVITIES PROGRAM THAT WORKS

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AN ACTIVITIES PROGRAM THAT WORKS
Leawood Middle School
Leawood, Kansas

by Harvey Greer
Assistant Principal

From "Turning Points": "There is a crucial need to help adolescents at this early age to acquire durable self-esteem, flexible and inquiring minds, reliable and relatively close human relationships, a sense of belonging in a valued group, and a sense of of usefulness in some way beyond the self."

The task of developing and placing into action an effective middle school activities program which helps meets the needs as identified by "Turning Points" is one which has haunted many middle school administrators. Determining the exact needs of the students of the particular community and then balancing those needs with the political realities of the community is not an easy balancing act. At Leawood Middle School, we seem to have found a balance that is working for our students at the current time. This program, for description purposes, can basically be divided into Advisor/Advisee, Student Government, Athletics, Cheerleading and Drill Team, Performing Arts, Intramurals, and our PACE (activities) program.

THE ADVISOR/ADVISEE PROGRAM

The Leawood Middle School administration and staff has the continuing goal of trying to provide an environment in which all of our student needs are met. We believe a significant percentage of these needs are met through our advisor-advisee program and our public service programs. All of our students are involved twice a week in advisor-advisee activities and

every student is involved, through the advisor-advisee program , in a public service project. We currently have more than 60 separate public service projects underway with our students.

STUDENT GOVERNMENT

Our student government meets on Monday mornings from 8:00 - 8:25 A.M. The officers are selected through school wide elections but all students may be involved in representing their Eagle Base (homeroom). These representatives are selected on a rotating basis throughout the school year to insure that all students have the opportunity of participating.

INTERSCHOOL ATHLETICS, DRILL TEAM, AND CHEERLEADING"

Leawood Middle School offers only one competitive sport at the 7th grade level and that is track and field. This is a "no-cut" activity and we schedule enough meets that all students are assured they will have the opportunity to compete in several meets. It is our belief this is a reasonable transition activity as the student nears the 8th grade level where more formally organized competitive programs will be available.

On the 8th grade level, we sponsor a maximum of four teams in volleyball, girls basketball, and boys basketball. The first two teams at each level are determined on the basis of ability and the other two teams are "balanced" athletic teams with the talent equally divided. Football and track and field are offered as "no-cut" activities. If we have enough 8th graders tryout for football, we will schedule additional "B" level contests to assure all players receive adequate game playing time.

Drill Team is a winter activity and we can accommodate two full drill teams. Separate cheerleading squads are selected for the Fall and Winter seasons.

As of the spring of 1991, we have not "cut" any participants from any of these activities and it does not appear we will have to in the near future. It is our goal, if at all possible, to eliminate any "cutting" of middle school students.

PERFORMING ARTS

In addition to the curriculum based vocal and instrumental music program, LMS sponsors a Fall Musical and a Spring Play production. Every student who tries out for these productions is assured of some part in them. It has been a tradition at LMS to double-cast the productions so as to allow a maximum number of students to be involved. In 1991, we triple casted the Spring Play, added an extra evening production, as we had an unusual number of students indicate an interest in participating.

THE INTRAMURAL PROGRAM

The intramural program is an after and/or before school program which is open to all students in our building. We have offered activities such as flag football, volleyball, basketball, yo-yo tournaments, jet cars, badminton, 3 point shooting contests, and other activities. Participation is at a high level and it is our goal for all students to be involved.

THE "PACE" (ACTIVITIES) PROGRAM

The PACE program (Participatory Activities Create Enjoyment) combines the components of a school club program with a formal school academic competition program, and an activities program with activities which are age level appropriate. The success of this program has been beyond our original expectations. Through a combined effort of students, staff, and administration, we have managed to create a program for which the staff and students have enthusiastic support.

Participatory Activities Create Enjoyment is a program which directly involves all of the students in Leawood Middle School for a minimum of 25 minutes in games and club activities on every Friday morning of the school year. The PACE school year is organizationally divided into the following six week periods:

1st. 6 weeks:	Games program each Friday morning.
2nd. 6 weeks:	Club activities each Friday morning.
3rd. 6 weeks:	Club activities each Friday morning.
4th. 6 weeks:	Knowledge Bowl competition each Friday morning.
5th. 6 weeks:	Club activities each Friday morning.
6th. 6 weeks:	Games program each Friday morning.

The games which are played during the 1st and 6th six week periods are grade level appropriate and many of them are played on the grass areas which surround our building. Listed below are the games in which each grade level may participate:

6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade
Paper Plane Contest	Foot Volleyball	Ping Pong Blow
Free Throws	Free Throws	Free Throws

Balloon Football	Silly Relays	Golf
Pin Guard	Stand Up	Creative Tug of War
Charades	Charades	Charades
Box Relays	Siamese Soccer	Foot Volleyball
Pictionary	Pictionary	Pictionary
Indian File Dodgeball	Indian File Dodgeball	Hunker Hawser

The club activities part of the PACE program will offer every student the opportunity to participate in the club of his/her choide on Friday mornings. During the past three years, we offered our students as many as 92 clubs during a single school year. These clubs are sponsored by teachers, counselors, administrators, our librarian, secretaries, and staff aides. Some of the clubs which have been offered are: Art, Debate, Fishing, Basketball, Frisbee, Photo Essay, Gardening, Uno, Chess, Beginning Bridge, Cat Lovers, St. Joseph Health Center, Walking, Caligraphy, Horse Riders, Sports Collectibles, Boomerang, and on and on. If a group of students indicate an interest in an area in which we do not have a club, we will develop one.

The Knowledge Bowl, which is conducted during the 4th six week period, consists of competition between Eagle Base (homeroom) classes. Questions for the Knowledge Bowl are appropriate to the grade level of the students and are approved in advance by grade level teachers. These questions are updated each year. Every student will be on a competitive team a minimum of one time. All students attend the various competitions.

It is our belief these activities are educationally beneficial for our students in many ways. Some of the benefits are as follows: continuing to explore the many opportunities and interests that are available in life...

the opportunity to participate with adults in an activity...the opportunity of participating in games in a structured way...the opportunity to work with fellow students towards a common goal...a growing confidence in the self and, hopefully, enhancement of self-esteem...learning about teamwork and the importance of cooperation and support in low stress situations ...reinforcing their belief that school is fun...getting to know the staff members better...etc.

The key element to a successful activities program, such as our PACE program, is the strong and creative support of the school staff. We are fortunate that we have an enthusiastic staff which is responsive to our students. Our staff presents these activities with an enthusiasm that is contagious and agrees with the administration when we say we conside the PACE program to be an important part of our middle school curriculum.